

archive.today

webpage capture

Saved from <https://www.change.org/p/jacques-frémont-did-university-of-ottawa-persecute>

search

1 May 2025 10:56:08 UTC

All snapshots from host www.change.org

history ← prior next →

Webpage

Screenshot

share

download .zip

report bug or abuse

Buy me a coffee

change.org

My petitions

Membership

Search

Start a petition

Log in

DID UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA PERSECUTE A PROFESSOR ON ITS FACULTY?

 **Victory**

This petition made change with
841 supporters!

 **Share on Facebook** **Send via WhatsApp** **Post on X** **Copy link** **Send via email**Decision Maker: Jacques Frémont2 Updates

The Issue

A Petition in Support of Denis Rancourt

Denis Rancourt was a professor in the department of physics at the University of Ottawa from 1987 until 2009. He occupied the highest academic rank of Full Professor beginning in 1997.

Rancourt has published over 100 articles in leading scientific journals and taught thousands of students.

He created the popular "Science in Society" course, which he taught in the largest auditorium on campus.

In the classroom Rancourt moved beyond a dry expert treatment of the subject-matter into addressing social implications and professional responsibility. He also experimented with and implemented grading methods intended to be less oppressive and more likely to stimulate freedom of inquiry. Still, he scrupulously adhered to his professorial responsibilities.

Rancourt was a staunch critic of university executives and defended students against institutional discrimination and racism.

The university dismissed Rancourt in 2009 on the spurious pretext that he assigned top grades to all 23 students in one advanced physics course. However, each grade assessment was demonstrably based on the respective student's academic performance.

Rancourt's union is still appealing the case in the courts. The university has done everything possible to derail the legal process as it spends without limit on lawyers from prestigious law firms.

The university's persecution of Denis Rancourt has been relentless. It has arrested him on campus for "trespassing" while he facilitated an event, and locked out all his research students from their laboratory and offices without warning.

We, the undersigned, would want and expect the University of Ottawa to answer these questions:

Why did the University of Ottawa spy on Denis Rancourt?

The University enlisted a student spy (Maureen Robinson) to covertly surveil Denis Rancourt for more than one year while he was a professor. She provided weekly reports about Denis Rancourt to the university; used a false cyber identity ("Nathalie Page"); and falsely represented herself to third parties. The spy's actions were condoned by her immediate supervisors: Dean André E. Lalonde and University Legal Counsel Michelle Flaherty (subsequently Chair of the Human Rights Tribunal for Ontario, now a law professor). The spy's role was described by an Ontario appellate-court judge as "troubling at best."

Why did the University of Ottawa smear Denis Rancourt with a hired psychiatrist using misappropriated personal information?

In 2008, University VP-Governance Nathalie Des Rosiers (subsequently Director of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, now Minister of the Environment for Ontario) coordinated a capture of Denis Rancourt's intimate childhood information for use by a hired psychiatrist, to render a written "psychiatric opinion" of the professor without his consent or knowledge. The university did not inform Rancourt of its actions, and vigorously opposed his access to the psychiatric report until the final hour of an appeal in litigation for access in 2017.

Why did the University of Ottawa destroy Denis Rancourt's professional research?

The University acknowledges that it destroyed Rancourt's large and unique collection of scientific samples. He considered himself their custodian on behalf of the scientific community. Many of the samples were irreplaceable and priceless.[*] The Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APUO) has assumed a \$1.25 million grievance concerning this destruction.

It is Time for a Fair and Equitable Resolution

We, the undersigned, believe that the University of Ottawa must immediately cease and desist from harassing Denis Rancourt. He deserves a reasonable settlement that will enable him to resume his professional work as an educator and scientist.

[*] The hundreds of destroyed scientific samples included the only large non-oxidized piece of the Santa Catharina meteorite, in which the meteoritic metallic phase “antitaenite” was discovered; the only large sample of remnants of the K/T boundary meteorite that may have killed the dinosaurs; unique suites of synthetic layer silicate compounds; suites of loess-paleosol samples (ancient soils) from two sites, in China and Eastern Europe; preserved samples of sediments from 100 lakes in Canada, from the largest study of its kind in the boreal forest; synthetic compounds and alloys having unique electronic, magnetic, and magneto-volume properties.

Tim Anderson - Senior Lecturer in Political Economy, University of Sydney

Eva Bartlett - Independent journalist

Peter Biesterfeld - Journalist, Now Magazine Toronto

Ignacio Chapela - Associate Professor, Environmental Science, Policy and Management, University of California, Berkeley

Edward C. Corrigan - Human rights lawyer, author and media commentator

Yves Engler - Author, public intellectual

Norman Finkelstein - Author, public intellectual

Jesse Freeston - Documentary film maker and journalist

Hazel Gashoka - M.A. Candidate, Health Policy & Equity, York University

Mireille Gervais - Director, Student Rights Centre, Student Federation of the University of Ottawa

Peter Gose - Professor, Carleton University

Vigil Grandfield - Investigative journalist

Joseph Hickey - Executive Director, Ontario Civil Liberties Association

Claude Lamontagne - Retired Professor of Psychology, University of Ottawa

Stephen Lendman - Journalist, USA

Cynthia McKinney - US Congresswoman for 12 years, first African-American woman to represent Georgia in the House of Representatives

Rick Mehta - Associate Professor of Psychology, Acadia University

Mark Mercer - Full Professor; Chair, Department of Philosophy, Saint Mary's University; President, Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

Adele Mercier - Associate Professor, Queens University

Gary Metallic Sr - District Chief, Gespegawagi Overseers Tribal Council

Marc Morano - Director, Climate Depot

Robin Öberg - PhD Candidate, Anthropology, Exeter University

Jeff Schmidt - Author of Disciplined Minds, and former Physics Today magazine staff editor

Michel Seymour - Professeur titulaire, Université de Montréal

Marc Spooner - Professor of Education, University of Regina

Ken Stone - Activist, Hamilton, Ontario

Julia Tourianski - Producer, Brave the World

Jean-Marie Vianney - Coordonnateur, Union provinciale des minorités raciales et ethnoculturelles francophones

Background links:

[Academic Freedom? How Nasty Can a University Be? -By Denis Rancourt](#)

[A letter to President Fremont, with attachments](#)

[Report a policy violation](#)



Denis Rancourt

Petition Starter

Media inquiries

The Decision Makers



Jacques Frémont

President, University of Ottawa

☹ No response

Support Change — **Become a Member Today**

Not beholden to politics or power brokers, Change.org is free for people everywhere to make change. Every day there are real victories for issues you care about, only possible because we are 100% funded by everyday people like you.

\$4

\$6

\$11

\$21

Other

[Support Change.org](#)Pay with credit card or [PayPal](#)

Will you stand with us to protect the power of everyday people to make a difference?

Petition updates



Victory

Jan 17, 2019 —

On January 16, 2019, in voluntary global settlement negotiations led by labour arbitrator Willian Kaplan, the matters in dispute between the University of Ottawa and professor Denis Rancourt were amicably resolved. Denis says he is very happy with this and pleased to move on with his continued civil liberties advocacy and social theory research, plus some environmental research.

Resolved! The goal of the petition was reached. The matters in dispute were amicably resolved.

6 years ago

On January 16, 2019, in voluntary global settlement negotiations led by labour arbitrator Willian Kaplan, the matters in dispute between the University of Ottawa and professor Denis Rancourt were amicably resolved. Denis says he is...

Quebec medical tribunal will decide regarding psychiatrist Louis Morissette

7 years ago

On the issue of the secret psychiatric report... On April 2, 2018, Professor Denis Rancourt appealed to the review committee of the medical tribunal of Quebec. Read my article summary at Dissident Voice. SOCIETAL IMPORTANCE OF THE...

[More updates](#)

Share this petition

[Share on Facebook](#)



Share this petition in person or use the QR code for your own material.

[Download QR Code](#)

Send via WhatsApp

Post on X

Copy link

Send via email

Petition created on March 19, 2018

[Change.org](#) > [Academic Freedom](#) >

[DID UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA PERSECUTE A PROFESSOR ON ITS FACULTY?](#)

Petitions promoted by other Change.org users

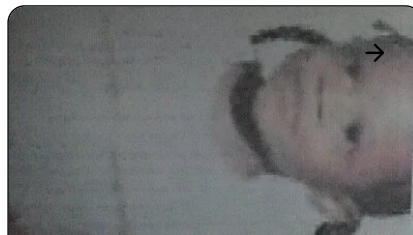


Promoted by 3 supporters

Improve Medical Research and Treatment for Chronic Illnesses

20 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)

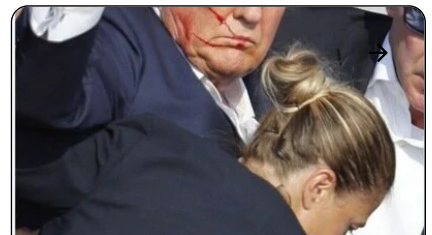


Promoted by 1 supporter

Establish Free Trade Policies, Replacing War-Tariff Taxes and Sanctions

1 signature

[Sign this petition](#)

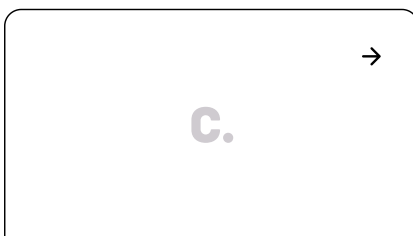


Promoted by 1 supporter

Include Donald Trump's Likeness on Mount Rushmore

4 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Implement a Four-Day School Week in All Idaho School Districts and Charter Schools

Boise, ID, USA

5 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 38 supporters

Save Monster High 3 from Cancellation!

2,947 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Education Equity Initiative

10 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 89 supporters

Save Brooklyn Rhythmics: Maintain their home/space and affordable accessibility to youth

 920 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)

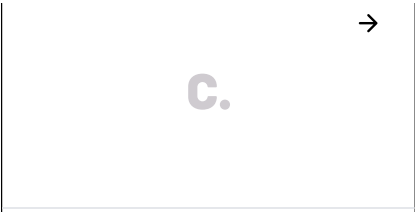


Promoted by 1 supporter

Draft Michelle Obama to Lead America as the Next President

 3 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 21 supporters

Petition to Change Criteria to Ensure Fairness in 2024-2025 USA(J)MO Qualification

 320 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Enact Laws for Judicial Transparency and Accountability to Combat Conspiracies

 7 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Petition to Amend Colorado's Workers' Compensation Act

Colorado, USA

 4 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 66 supporters

Parole Block Robert Alan Grigsby

 2,106 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Award Bharat Ratna to Esteemed Conductor Zubin Mehta

 4 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Implement Free Access to All State Parks for Military Veterans and Retirees

Virginia, USA

 15 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 1 supporter

Make Menstrual Products Free and Accessible to All

San Antonio, TX, USA

 18 signatures

[Sign this petition](#)



Promoted by 5 supporters

End Unregulated Backyard Breeding of Dogs Nationwide



Promoted by 1 supporter

Ban Insurance Companies From Using Credit Score to



Promoted by 55 supporters

Remove Doug Smith as YV Animal Shelter Manager

Victorious Petitions



Victory!

Support Beyul Retreat: Approve Permanent Gathering Space

*When you sign, please note your Roaring Fork Valley town and zip code for the submission to the BOCC. Please sign by...

[Read more](#)


Support Beyul Retreat

513



Victory!

Fix the NYC Schools Calendar: No School on Monday Before...

My name is Isaac and I'm a 7th grader in Brooklyn, New York. I love to think about calendars and I noticed a problem: Winter...

[Read more](#)


Isaac Regnier

23,012



Victory!

FDA, Approve Life-Saving Nasal Epinephrine for Anaphylactic...

As a food allergy advocate and concerned parent of a child with severe food allergies, I am writing this petition to urge the Food a...

[Read more](#)


Dave Bloom

40,556

Newly created petitions



McMaster University is complicit in genocide - Cut tie...

**When signing your name please be specific and indicate if you are a student, faculty member, staff member, and/or...

[Read more](#)


SPHR McMaster

1,348



Stop Frances Widdowson from Speaking at University of...

Frances Widdowson is a residential school denialist, Anti BLM, and trans rights critic who was fired Mount Royal University for h...

[Read more](#)


Concerned Students

2,329



Canada Institute of Linguistics should create an IP policy to...

Canadian legal tradition has long recognized that all members of academic institutions have the legal right to own the copyright of...

[Read more](#)


Norbert Rennert

233

Company

About

Community

Blog

Support

Help

Connect

X

Guides

Petition Guides

- Impact

Careers

Team
- Press

Community Guidelines
- Privacy

Terms

Cookie Policy

Manage Cookies
- Facebook

Instagram
- Create Your Petition

Collect Signatures

Reach out to Media

Engage Your Decision Maker

© 2025, Change.org, PBC

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

English (United States) ▼

[About DV](#)[Archives](#)[Donate](#)[Contact Us](#)[Submissions](#)[Books](#)[Links](#)

Search

Browse by Topic

"Aid" (79) ▼

Filter articles

Poetry on Sunday

Latest Articles

Opening Gaza to the Foreign
Press Corps
Binoy Kampmark / 08/31/2025

Personal Finance
J.S. O'Keefe / 08/31/2025

"The Fire Doesn't Ask Before
Books Disappear"
Bill Berkowitz / 08/31/2025

Planting Grazing Mowing
Bernadette Gallagher /
08/31/2025

Happening
Ananya S. Guha / 08/31/2025

Civics 101
Greg Wood / 08/31/2025

Thoughts and Prayers
Erin Hoffman / 08/31/2025

The Price of Freedom
Jack Random / 08/31/2025

Ribcage at Twilight
Joseph G. Ramsey / 08/31/2025

The Nature of Change is
Change
Margery Parsons / 08/31/2025

Recommended
Reading



Academic Freedom? How Nasty Can a University Be?

by Denis Rancourt / February 17th, 2018

The present era of reactionary institutional responses to violations of political correctness is exposing the fact that "academic freedom", of both professors and students, does not really mean much, except what it has always meant.

In the concluding paragraphs of her chapter on academic freedom in her 1986 book *No Ivory Tower*, Ellen W. Schrecker brilliantly states what modern academic freedom has always been and was always meant to be:

“The academic world of Schaper and Cattell, Ely and Nearing, was to change considerably over the next few decades. Especially in the years following the Second World War, the American system of higher education was to expand in size and to become a more democratic and less genteel place. Yet its treatment of political dissidents changed little. The same pattern of pressures and responses that set the early precedents determined the later cases as well. There were some differences to be sure, especially in procedural matters. There was more faculty participation, for example. This was largely the result of the academic profession's success in establishing the principle of tenure. Though its possession did not invariably protect controversial professors from being fired, by the 1940s and 1950s it did usually ensure that they got some kind of a faculty hearing.

Procedures apart, however, there were fewer differences than we might assume. Institutional loyalty was the overriding concern. In almost every situation, faculty members and administrators responded to outside pressures for the dismissal of dissenting faculty members in accord with what they believed would best protect or enhance their schools reputation. The rhetoric of academic freedom obscures those concerns, as, in many instances, it was designed to. After all, even the famous academic freedom statement that the University of Wisconsin released after the Regents reinstated Richard T. Ely in 1894 was planned in part as a piece of institutional promotion-as, in the words of the man who suggested it, "an excellent advertisement for the institution." Stripped of its rhetoric, academic freedom thus turns out to be an essentially corporate protection. And, as we trace its development

What I Saw in Ukraine: 2015-2022 – Diary of an International Observer
Benoit Paré



Genocide in Gaza: Voices of Global Conscience
Ahmet Davutoglu and Richard Falk (Eds)



Highway to Hell: The Armageddon Chronicles, 2015-2024
Scott Ritter



At the Lost and Found: Personal & Political Dispatches of Resistance and Hope
Edward Curtin



That Book Is Dangerous!: How Moral Panic, Social Media, and the Culture Wars Are Remaking Publishing
Adam Szelela



Provoked: How Washington Started the New Cold War with Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine
Scott Horton

during the Cold War, we should not be surprised to find that it was invoked more often to defend the well-being of an institution than the political rights of an individual. ((The two last paragraphs of Chapter I: “An Excellent Advertizement for the Institution”: The Development of Academic Freedom, 1886-1918; in Ellen W. Schrecker’s *No Ivory Tower – McCarthyism and the Universities*, Oxford University Press, 1986.))

Nonetheless, it is interesting to ask: Just how far can a Western university, in a so-called free and democratic society, go in violating the freedom of expression and the professional independence of a tenured professor?

My own case gives a graphic answer to this question.

First, here is the background of what was actually happening in the classroom. This letter from a parent on one of my students was published in Canada’s largest national newspaper on February 9, 2009:

“

“Free to Learn” by Julia Debono

Windsor, Ont. — In 2006, while shadowing my daughter, then a student at the University of Ottawa, I attended one of Denis Rancourt’s classes (Professor Makes His Mark, But It Costs Him His Job – Feb. 6). Prof. Rancourt, clearly a dedicated, principled teacher, moderated a spirited, engaging, intellectually provocative discussion in which about 50 students eagerly participated.

Other undergraduate classes that I attended consisted of the professor lecturing while students chatted, surfed the Net or took verbatim notes. Few asked questions and there were no discussions, even when the professor asked for some.

Prof. Rancourt’s class resembled classes I had at the University of Michigan’s Residential College in the mid-1970s, right down to the use of narrative summaries instead of grades to evaluate learning.

His class was an example of the kind of educational experience I sent my daughter to university to be a part of. ((Letter to the Editor, *Globe & Mail* (National Edition), February 9, 2009.))

There were hundreds of such letters to the university and to media, and a large petition. Here is my report of how my first-year (freshman) physics course had developed: “How to Not Teach Physics”. ((Rancourt, Denis. [How to Not Teach Physics](#). *Dissident Voice*, January 2, 2013.))

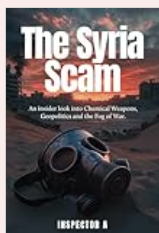
In addition, I was publicly critical of the university administration on my “U of O Watch” blog and I practiced reform wherever I could legally do so, given the on-paper guaranties of my academic freedom and professional independence.

Twice the university disciplined me for allegedly not following the curriculum. Both times the university was rebuffed by binding arbitration decisions and the discipline was removed. I established that in Ontario a university professor is allowed to be political in the classroom, in addition to covering the curriculum, even in a science course. This irked the reactionary administration to no end.

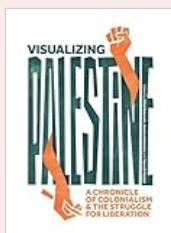
As a result, sometimes the political activism would spill over into students demanding their rights within the institution. There was an upsurge of student activism in the years that I taught, which I mostly attribute to reactions against oppressive policies and an influx of politically savvy international students. But, of course, the administration blamed me and scribbled network diagrams about it in their notes (I saw this in access-to-information records).



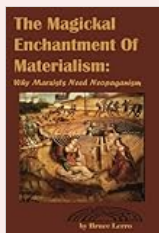
Long Live Novichok!: The British poison which fooled the world
John Helmer



The Syria Scam: An Insider Look into Chemical Weapons, Geopolitics and the Fog of War
Inspector A



Visualizing Palestine: A Chronicle of Colonialism and the Struggle for Liberation
Visualizing Palestine



The Magickal Enchantment of Materialism: Why Marxists Need Neopaganism
Paperback
Bruce Lerro

[More books »](#)

In one such “spill over”, the president — experienced trial lawyer, former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and former Liberal prospective candidate for Prime Minister of Canada, Allan Rock — was publicly exposed intimidating a student complainant, in the president’s office. The student’s audio recording was played on regional cable TV, and a link of it was sent to all the university’s students by email. The president never did that again.

Within a few weeks after the cable TV show aired, my many research graduate students and I were locked out of our laboratory without notice and, as I learned in 2017, the university destroyed my large collections of valuable scientific samples, and immediately made the laboratory inoperable.

The violations of my academic and constitutional rights that also occurred prior to and after the lock out are difficult to grasp, but they did occur, and many “respectable” high officials were knowingly involved. Now I want the new president to fix this and the university to be accountable. This recent letter is how I presented the case to the new president:

“

January 8, 2018

Jacques Frémont
President and Vice-Chancellor
University of Ottawa
550 Cumberland, Room 212
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

f: 613-562-5103
e: president@uOttawa.ca
By email and by fax

Re: Ending the University of Ottawa’s unrelenting punishment of me

Dear President Frémont,

I was a professor in the department of physics at the University of Ottawa from 1987 until 2009. I occupied the highest academic rank of Full Professor beginning in 1997.

I am recognized as an expert in my profession and have taught thousands of students. I am a much appreciated teacher and research supervisor and I have published over 100 articles in leading journals in several areas of science ([my present h-index score is 35](#)).

I taught the Senate-approved course “Science in Society”, which I created following campus-wide student demand, in the largest auditorium on campus. It was informally known as the activism course.

I was a critic of the university and I defended students against what I saw as institutional discrimination and racism. In so doing, I used Malcolm X’s political term, “house negro”. I did this in the context of a struggle for justice and in good faith, as attested to by the attached letters to you from community activists: Hazel Gashoka, Jean-Marie Vianney, and Cynthia McKinney.

The university dismissed me in 2009 using the pretext of my having assigned high grades to all 23 students in one advanced physics course, and then spent over \$1 million sponsoring a large defamation lawsuit against me.

You have emptied out my bank account by court order, you have repeatedly threatened to take my family’s home, and

you have asserted that you will continue to enforce recovery of your legal costs in excess of \$1 million. Therefore, I am not able to pursue my work as a teacher and scholar, since you would take every penny.

You destroyed my career and took everything I have. You have done enough. I'm hoping that your sense of decency will cause you to grant this request for relief.

The university's punishment of me has been relentless, including the following.

Destroyed scientific samples

Recently this year, as I sought to continue my scientific work, the university said that it destroyed my large and unique collection of scientific samples — when it locked me and my students out of our laboratory while I was still a full professor.

Many of the samples are irreplaceable and priceless, and I considered myself their custodian on behalf the scientific community. The Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APUO) has assumed my \$1.25 million grievance concerning this destruction.

The destroyed scientific samples included:

(a) The only large non-oxidized piece of the Santa Catharina meteorite, in which the meteoritic metallic phase “antitaenite” was discovered.

(b) The only large sample of remnants of the K/T boundary meteorite that may have killed the dinosaurs, collected in the field by a leading-expert collaborator, and kept in a sealed atmosphere.

(c) Unique suites of synthetic layer silicate compounds, which led to several fundamental discoveries.

(d) Suites of loess-paleosol samples (ancient soils) from two sites, in China and Eastern Europe.

(e) Preserved samples of sediments from 100 lakes in Canada, from the largest study of its kind in the boreal forest.

(f) Several suites of samples of synthetic compounds and alloys having unique electronic, magnetic, and magneto-volume properties.

For years the university threatened to destroy my personal papers, too. Since 2008, the university refused to give me access to my belongings from my personal office in the physics building. The materials were research notes, original course content, unpublished book manuscripts, two decades of correspondence, specialized books, and much more. Only recently, thanks to your direct intervention, was I able to recover the more than 200 cubic feet of paper materials.

Student spy

The university hired a student spy (Maureen Robinson) to covertly surveil me for more than one year while I was a professor. Her actions were condoned by her immediate

supervisors (the dean and the legal counsel of the university) and included using a false cyber identity (“Nathalie Page”) and falsely representing herself personally to third parties. The student spy provided weekly reports about me to the university. Her role was described by an Ontario appellate-court judge in his motion ruling in the following terms:

Maureen Robinson

[15] The circumstances of Maureen Robinson’s involvement in this entire matter is troubling at best. Throughout the relevant portion of the Award by Arbitrator Foisy, Ms. Robinson’s written notes were referred to [as] “the report on Professor Rancourt’s address prepared by a University of Ottawa student”.

[16] Pursuant to the Udell Affidavit, and based on evidence from the hearing, the student being Maureen Robinson was the editor of the student newspaper who had been hired by the University in what the University described as in a clerical capacity to assist Professor Rancourt in his office, without his input on her hiring.

[17] Either in consultation with her employer, the University, or on her own, she monitored the activities of Professor Rancourt both on and off campus and reported her finding back to the University. In an email to Dean Lalonde, she admitted to having a “personal grudge” against Professor Rancourt and went so far as to liken her monitoring of Professor Rancourt as “posing as a young girl to catch a pedophile”. Ms. Robinson was not called as a witness at the hearing and, the parties agreed that her “report” would be considered as an “*aide memoire*” only.

[18] The University referred to the “report” thereafter as a transcript which such description was objected to by the APUO. Similarly, Arbitrator Foisy made certain findings which appear to be based solely on the report which was not evidence. [Underlined sub-title in original]

Covert psychiatric report

In 2008, the university’s VP-Governance coordinated a capture of my intimate childhood information for use by a hired psychiatrist to make a written “psychiatric opinion” of me without my consent or knowledge.

The university thereby violated my constitutional privacy rights, my personal dignity and integrity, and numerous ethical codes regarding expert medical diagnoses.

The university followed this by not informing me of its actions, and by vigorously opposing my access to the psychiatric report until the final hour of an appeal in litigation for access in 2017.

You have a reputation as an advocate of human rights, and you recently took charge of the university’s case with me.

I write to you now to ask for a fair resolution that will allow me to resume my work as an educator and scientist, and to earn my living in this way. As it stands, the university would seize all of my income, just as it recently seized my bank

account. The interest alone that you seek is more than \$30,000.00 per year.

Please assure me that you will instruct the university lawyers that a settlement is needed that will allow me to resume my career.

Yours truly,

[original signed]

Professor Denis Rancourt
[address]

Encl.: Letters from Hazel Gashoka, Jean-Marie Vianney, and Cynthia McKinney [three attachments in the original].
(("2018 01 08 Letter to end the University of Ottawa's [unrelenting punishment](#) of Denis Rancourt", and [direct link](#) to the document as PDF file.))

That is how nasty a university in a free and democratic society can be. I know other public institutions behave the same way but we rarely find out. I have been dedicated to uncovering as much as I can.

I have been guided by this quote:

“ One knows ... that the university and in a general way, all teaching systems, which appear simply to disseminate knowledge, are made to maintain a certain social class in power; and to exclude the instruments of power of another social class. ... It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticise the workings of institutions, which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise and attack them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them.

— Foucault, debating Chomsky, 1971. (([“Human Nature: Justice versus Power”](#), Noam Chomsky debates with Michel Foucault, 1971.))



Denis G. Rancourt is a former tenured full professor of physics at the University of Ottawa, Canada. He is a researcher for the [Ontario Civil Liberties Association](#). He has published [more than 100 articles in leading scientific journals](#), on physics and environmental science. He is the author of the book [Hierarchy and Free Expression in the Fight Against Racism](#). Denis can be reached at denis.rancourt@gmail.com. [Read other articles by Denis](#).

This article was posted on Saturday, February 17th, 2018 at 8:04pm and is filed under [Academic Freedom](#), [Activism](#), [Canada](#), [Freedom of Expression/Speech](#).

January 8, 2018

Jacques Frémont
President and Vice-Chancellor
University of Ottawa
550 Cumberland, Room 212
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
f: 613-562-5103
e: president@uOttawa.ca
By email and by fax

Re: Ending the University of Ottawa's unrelenting punishment of me

Dear President Frémont,

I was a professor in the department of physics at the University of Ottawa from 1987 until 2009. I occupied the highest academic rank of Full Professor beginning in 1997.

I am recognized as an expert in my profession and have taught thousands of students. I am a much appreciated teacher and research supervisor and I have published over 100 articles in leading journals in several areas of science ([my present h-index score is 35](#)).

I taught the Senate-approved course "Science in Society", which I created following campus-wide student demand, in the largest auditorium on campus. It was informally known as the activism course.

I was a critic of the university and I defended students against what I saw as institutional discrimination and racism. In so doing, I used Malcolm X's political term, "house negro". I did this in the context of a struggle for justice and in good faith, as attested to by the attached letters to you from community activists: Hazel Gashoka, Jean-Marie Vianney, and Cynthia McKinney.

The university dismissed me in 2009 using the pretext of my having assigned high grades to all 23 students in one advanced physics course, and then spent over \$1 million sponsoring a large defamation lawsuit against me.

You have emptied out my bank account by court order, you have repeatedly threatened to take my family's home, and you have asserted that you will continue to enforce recovery of your legal costs in excess of \$1 million. Therefore, I am not able to pursue my work as a teacher and scholar, since you would take every penny.

You destroyed my career and took everything I have. You have done enough. I'm hoping that your sense of decency will cause you to grant this request for relief.

The university's punishment of me has been relentless, including the following.

Destroyed scientific samples

Recently this year, as I sought to continue my scientific work, the university said that it destroyed my large and unique collection of scientific samples — when it locked me and my students out of our laboratory while I was still a full professor.

Many of the samples are irreplaceable and priceless, and I considered myself their custodian on behalf the scientific community. The Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APUO) has assumed my \$1.25 million grievance concerning this destruction.

The destroyed scientific samples included:

- (a) The only large non-oxidized piece of the Santa Catharina meteorite, in which the meteoritic metallic phase “antitaenite” was discovered.
- (b) The only large sample of remnants of the K/T boundary meteorite that may have killed the dinosaurs, collected in the field by a leading-expert collaborator, and kept in a sealed atmosphere.
- (c) Unique suites of synthetic layer silicate compounds, which led to several fundamental discoveries.
- (d) Suites of loess-paleosol samples (ancient soils) from two sites, in China and Eastern Europe.
- (e) Preserved samples of sediments from 100 lakes in Canada, from the largest study of its kind in the boreal forest.
- (f) Several suites of samples of synthetic compounds and alloys having unique electronic, magnetic, and magneto-volume properties.

For years the university threatened to destroy my personal papers, too. Since 2008, the university refused to give me access to my belongings from my personal office in the physics building. The materials were research notes, original course content, unpublished book manuscripts, two decades of correspondence, specialized books, and much more. Only recently, thanks to your direct intervention, was I able to recover the more than 200 cubic feet of paper materials.

Student spy

The university hired a student spy (Maureen Robinson) to covertly surveil me for more than one year while I was a professor. Her actions were condoned by her immediate supervisors (the dean and the legal counsel of the university) and included using a false cyber identity (“Nathalie Page”) and falsely representing herself personally to third

parties. The student spy provided weekly reports about me to the university. Her role was described by an Ontario appellate-court judge in his motion ruling in the following terms: ¹

MAUREEN ROBINSON

[15] The circumstances of Maureen Robinson's involvement in this entire matter is troubling at best. Throughout the relevant portion of the Award by Arbitrator Foisy, Ms. Robinson's written notes were referred to [as] "the report on Professor Rancourt's address prepared by a University of Ottawa student".

[16] Pursuant to the Udell Affidavit, and based on evidence from the hearing, the student being Maureen Robinson was the editor of the student newspaper who had been hired by the University in what the University described as in a clerical capacity to assist Professor Rancourt in his office, without his input on her hiring.

[17] Either in consultation with her employer, the University, or on her own, she monitored the activities of Professor Rancourt both on and off campus and reported her finding back to the University. In an email to Dean Lalonde, she admitted to having a "personal grudge" against Professor Rancourt and went so far as to liken her monitoring of Professor Rancourt as "posing as a young girl to catch a pedophile". Ms. Robinson was not called as a witness at the hearing and, the parties agreed that her "report" would be considered as an "aide memoire" only.

[18] The University referred to the "report" thereafter as a transcript which such description was objected to by the APUO. Similarly, Arbitrator Foisy made certain findings which appear to be based solely on the report which was not evidence.

[Underlined sub-title in original]

Covert psychiatric report

In 2008, the university's VP-Governance coordinated a capture of my intimate childhood information for use by a hired psychiatrist to make a written "psychiatric opinion" of me without my consent or knowledge.

The university thereby violated my constitutional privacy rights, my personal dignity and integrity, and numerous ethical codes regarding expert medical diagnoses.

¹ [*Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa \(APUO\) and University of Ottawa*](#), Superior Court of Justice for Ontario (Divisional Court), dated 2015-10-26, Court File No. 14-2022, Justice Robert Scott, paras. 15 to 18

The university followed this by not informing me of its actions, and by vigorously opposing my access to the psychiatric report until the final hour of an appeal in litigation for access in 2017.

You have a reputation as an advocate of human rights, and you recently took charge of the university's case with me.

I write to you now to ask for a fair resolution that will allow me to resume my work as an educator and scientist, and to earn my living in this way. As it stands, the university would seize all of my income, just as it recently seized my bank account. The interest alone that you seek is more than \$30,000.00 per year.

Please assure me that you will instruct the university lawyers that a settlement is needed that will allow me to resume my career.

Yours truly,



Professor Denis Rancourt

[REDACTED]
Ottawa, ON [REDACTED]

t: [REDACTED]

e: denis.rancourt@[REDACTED]

Encl.: Letters from Hazel Gashoka, Jean-Marie Vianney, and Cynthia McKinney

December 13, 2017

Jacques Frémont
President
University of Ottawa

Dear President Jacques Frémont,

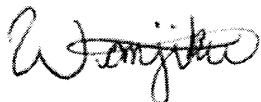
I have had the pleasure of knowing Dr. Denis Rancourt for the last decade. I met Dr. Rancourt when I was an undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa and, at that time, he was a physics professor. During the years of our acquaintance, I have known Dr. Rancourt in his capacity as a staunch advocate for human rights for all people – particularly racialized students.

As former Chairperson of the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO)'s Black History Month Committee, former president of the Kilimanjaro Black Student Association, Member of the 2008 Racism Task Force on Campus, co-founder of black caucus, and former student member of senate, I devoted all of my leisure time to issues of social justice and equity for racialized students at the University of Ottawa. I frequently attended seminars, rallies, and debates in relation to social justice and equity and one familiar face was always there: Dr. Denis Rancourt. In fact, the first time I met Dr. Rancourt was at a rally for Palestinian rights in the Agora square in the Jock Turcot Centre in 2007. Throughout the years, the SFUO's Appeal Centre held several press conferences to defend student rights and Dr. Rancourt was always present. Moreover, Dr. Rancourt assisted me when I experienced anti-Black racism in the classroom.

I have closely followed the defamation lawsuit against Dr. Denis Rancourt. While Dr. Rancourt used the term "house negro", it was done in defense of racialized students. The aim of Dr. Rancourt's blog post was to expose the University administration's involvement in Professor St. Lewis' evaluation of the SFUO's Appeal Centre 2008 report about racism. Moreover, the term "house negro" is based on the definition by the renowned and revolutionary civil rights activist Malcolm X. Dr. Rancourt did not use the term "house negro" in a malicious way. I am confident of this because Dr. Rancourt has worked alongside me – and several other racialized students – to support, develop, and advance our racial justice initiative at the University of Ottawa. As such, based on his tireless record for advocating on behalf of racialized students, it is clear to me that Dr. Rancourt actions were done in good faith and that he did not mean harm against Professor St. Lewis.

Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,



Hazel Gashoka, BA (Hons)
M.A. Candidate, Health Policy & Equity
York University, School of Health Policy and Management

Tel.: [REDACTED]

Email: hazel.gashoka@[REDACTED]



UNION PROVINCIALE DES MINORITÉS RACIALES ET ETHNOCULTURELLES FRANCOPHONES

Ottawa, 19 décembre 2017

Jacques Frémont, Président

Université d'Ottawa

Cher Mr. Frémont,

Je suis ami avec Mr. Denis Rancourt depuis que nous étions animateurs ensemble pendant plusieurs années à la radio communautaire CHUO 89.1 FM. En plus de produire sa propre émission, il a souvent contribué à mon émission « Afrique Plus/Ici l'Afrique ». Nous sommes restés de bons amis depuis nos premières collaborations en 2007 et lorsque je suis devenu coordonnateur l'émission du matin "Jambo Ottawa" pendant deux ans et demie comme chroniqueur et analyste et j'ai suivi ses difficultés avec l'université et avec le procès en diffamation que l'université a financé contre lui.

Denis Rancourt est un défenseur acharné des droits de la personne, et ses contributions médiatiques et d'activiste depuis 2005 le démontrent amplement. J'ai aucun doute de son dévouement pour le bien-être de tous et contre le racisme et l'injustice.

Denis a utilisé l'expression « house negro » (nègre de maison ou reine nègre) en voulant protéger les étudiants contre des abus discriminatoire et racistes. Il l'a fait de bonne foi et avec la conviction de bien faire. Sa critique aurait été irréprochable dans l'opinion publique s'il était noir; comme moi, étant membre de la communauté et venant tout juste d'assister au lancement de la Fédération des Canadiens Noirs à Toronto. La critique de monsieur Rancourt est donc irréprochable et rentre dans la démarche de La Décennie Internationale des personnes d'ascendance africaine proclamée par l'ONU dans sa résolution 68/237 de 2015-2024.

À mon avis monsieur Rancourt fait ici une critique politique de l'institution qui n'était aucunement basée sur une animosité personnelle.

Dans sa résolution, l'ONU demandait aux organismes nationaux et internationaux; aux pays; aux institutions ...de prendre des actions concrètes pour améliorer les conditions des victimes et des populations ci-dessus mentionnés à sortir de la marginalisation; de souligner leur contribution; la promotion de leur pleine intégration; éliminer/lutter contre le racisme et toutes formes de discriminations...à leur endroit. De ce fait, monsieur Rancourt il est un allié; une solution au problème et non le problème car les enjeux qu'il a soulevé en 2011 n'ont toujours pas de solutions.

Dans l'espoir que vous saurez prendre en considération les propositions suivantes pour appliquer un jugement positif à l'égard de Denis Rancourt.

Bien à vous,

Jean-Marie Vianney,

Coordonnateur, comité ad-hoc UPMREF,

Ancien Coordonnateur Jambo Ottawa

Producteur, animateur (CHUO-TV-Rogers, Unique FM)

Journaliste, Leader communautaire Ottawa-Gatineau

Trésorier ADAC,

jm_vianney@[REDACTED]

Tel. [REDACTED]

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY, PH.D.

<http://www.northsouth.edu/faculty-members/shss/pss-fm/cynthia.mckinney.html>

January 5, 2018

Jacques Frémont
President
University of Ottawa

Dear President Jacques Frémont:

In 1992 I was elected the first African-American woman to represent Georgia in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Member of Congress. I remained in the U.S. House of Representatives for 12 years, elected as a member of the Democratic Party. Before that, I had been elected to serve as a Georgia Representative in the Georgia General Assembly for 4 years. In 2008 I was the U.S. Green Party nominee for President in the federal election. I served as a Juror on the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Palestine, and sat at each of its Sessions in Barcelona, London, Cape Town, New York, and Brussels. My entire career has been devoted to fighting bigotry, injustice, and intimidation, especially the state sanctioned varieties against citizens.

I am currently a professor at North South University in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

I have known about Professor Denis Rancourt since I first heard of his 2005 activism course. As I see it, Dr. Rancourt stood up for University of Ottawa students and then got fired for doing so.

As you know, I made a petition in support of Dr. Rancourt in 2014, regarding the defamation lawsuit that your university sponsored against him. The sponsorship of the defamation trial was a disservice to all justice-seeking citizens.

I have already made a published analysis of the meaning and discourse necessity of the term "house Negro". Dr. Rancourt's use of the term was not malicious and was part of his valid criticism of a perceived systemic racism at the University reported by students and the student union. I urge you to rectify the disproportionate abuses that the University of Ottawa has made against Dr. Denis Rancourt.

Yours truly,

Cynthia McKinney, PhD